



RS 8th Grade Curriculum Topic Ideas

Look at explanations here and fill out the form online!

Anti-Bullying

Transitioning out of middle school and into high school may seem overwhelming. The way we treat ourselves and each other has a huge impact on the way we experience middle and high school!

Talk through some of the challenges in the way we approach one another, confront the main issues of bullying, and focus on Jewish themes like treating your neighbor the way you want to be treated. This curriculum has the potential to culminate with a trip to see Dear Evan Hansen or a similarly themed show on or off Broadway.

Bikkur Cholim

Helping those in need is notoriously a Jewish value. In this curriculum, explore where visiting the sick came to be a part of our Jewish narrative. Why does it feel good to help others? Then, create something to give to those who are sick and visit them! This curriculum has the potential to culminate with visiting a nursing home (3 direct community service hours given).

Citizenship

We too were once strangers in this land. Learn about how our ancestors may have become citizens in America and compare it to what is going on with citizenship today. What kind of impact can we make? This curriculum has the potential to culminate with a trip to Ellis Island.

Environmental Awareness

Global climate change. Seasons. Weather. Changes to our environment alter the way our land produces nutrients. How can we positively impact the carbon footprint while focusing on the theme of mitzvot? This curriculum has the potential to culminate with a trip to a farm or environmental organization (3 community service hours).



G.O.D. (Guaranteed Overnight Delivery) - Is God Listening?

What is God to you? Is God all powerful, all knowing being that is in control of everything? Or is God more of nature around us? Or do you believe that there is no such thing as God? Explore God through your own beliefs and look at how Jews have thought about God throughout the ages. This curriculum has the potential to culminate with a trip to a church to meet eighth graders like you.

Homelessness

Sometimes we forget that homelessness is all around us. Discuss the effects of homelessness on our community, see where narratives of homelessness come up in Jewish literature, and be inspired to help! This trip has the potential to culminate in a trip to a homeless shelter (3 hours of direct community service).

Israeli Innovations

Take a look at the Jewish inventors who have brought new technologies to the world. From the Technion Institute in Jerusalem to Facebook to the cellphone in your pocket look at Israelis and other Jews around the world who changed how we live our lives. This curriculum has the potential to culminate in a trip to a museum or an exhibit with hands on examples of Israeli innovations.

Israeli Pen Pal Program (Global programs)

Every day we communicate with our friends and family through words, text, social media... we know what's going on in each other's lives. But did you know that there are thousands of Jewish Americans who volunteer in the Israeli army who can't have a connection to home every day? Would you ever want to learn about how people like you live in a city like Westchester County in Israel? Have a chance to build connections with young Israelis who are just like you. This is something that can be done all year long as we move through the rest of the curricula.



Jewish Art

Are you an artist? Want to be one? Jewish Art can be used to dive deep into aspects of Judaism within the context of supporting these courses and can also be an elective on its own. Both types of art will be used in the middle school this year. No art experience necessary to participate. This curriculum has the potential to culminate in a trip to the Jewish Museum or another art exhibit connecting our Jewish values and Jewish culture with areas of artistic work.

Jewish Immigration

How did we get here in the first place? What was life like when we first arrived? Have you ever thought about the ways in which our ancestors' narratives can connect to the narratives of immigrants today? Explore the history of Jews as we came to the New York area and connect the dots between our history and the lives of immigrants in New York City. This curriculum has the potential to culminate in a trip to the Lower East Side to visit the Tenement Museum or tour neighborhoods with proof of Jewish life from the last century.

Jews in Sports

Can you name some Jewish sports stars in our world? Some have made headlines as Jewish all-stars while others fall under the radar. Here, discuss the ways in which Judaism has played a role in some of your favorite athletes' lives. Then, show others the same sort of values as we volunteer downtown for people just like us. This curriculum has the potential to culminate in a trip to the Boys and Girls Club of New Rochelle to volunteer with youth from our larger New Rochelle community (3 hours of direct community service).

Judaism 101

What do you do in a "sanctuary situation"?! Of course, you'll have to pull out your 'Jewish toolbox' - what's inside? Explore aspects of Jewish spirituality, prayer, and biblical stories. Feel prepared to embark on your adult Jewish journey and continue to be a part of the Jewish people. This is the class that will be from 9:00-10:00 am every Sunday morning with the rest of the middle school, covering a variety of topics from prayer to weekly *parsha* stories to writing one's own blessings and everything in between.



Sci-Fi Judaism

Here we will explore different Jewish theology including the Nature of God, prophecy, and the Nature of Humankind. Amazingly Jewish Theology has been described and debated in the great study houses and on the silver screen in movies. We will learn how popular culture reflects the idea of Jewish Theology. This curriculum has the potential to culminate in a trip to a science exhibit.

Shinshinim

Remember Ofek? We are lucky to have a new "Shinshinit" with us this year who is at Beth El to get to know us. We are excited to welcome her into the middle school! This will happen each week from 11:30 am-12:00 pm except for the weeks that the group goes on trips.

The Darkest Hour - Yom HaShoah

Not all aspects of being Jewish are happy and exciting, unfortunately. In our darkest hour, there were many people who tried to make a difference. Learn about the Holocaust through the eyes of survivors and those that lost their lives in the name of Judaism. Honor and memorialize the events of the Holocaust and take time to think about our role as Jews today. This curriculum has the potential to culminate in a trip to the Museum of Jewish Heritage or to a synagogue nearby to meet a Holocaust survivor and hear them speak.

Torah Highlights

Torah is handwritten and contains the stories of our people from our humble beginnings. Every word is important but did you know that not all of the Torah is written in the same style and format? Learn about these different places in the Torah; from Creation to the 10 Commandments to the crossing of the sea. Understand how the way the text is written adds to the meaning of the words. This curriculum has the potential to culminate with a trip to an experiential program that would bring some of these Torah highlights to life.



What's a Jew to Do?

Ethics and morals are extremely important in Judaism. But how do we know what to do when? Using the book, Pirkei Avot we will study what our Rabbis believed was the way to live a good Jewish life. How do the words of these rabbis relate to you today in the way you lead your Jewish life? Then we can look at the ways in which we pay it forward and support the community around us. Be an upstander - not a bystander and participate in projects throughout the year on a local, Jewish, and global level to repair our world. This curriculum has the potential to culminate in a service learning project that speaks to the group and could be its own curriculum or something the group continues to work on and think about throughout the course of the year.

Yiddish Culture

Ever wondered about the words your Bubby uses and where they originated? Curious about what life was like back in the "shtetl"? Learn about the Ashkenazi history in Eastern Europe and then see it in action! This curriculum has the potential to culminate with a trip to the Yiddish Theater!